

Improving B1 level listening comprehension skills in economically disadvantaged university students through radio and podcasts

Mejorando las habilidades de comprensión auditiva del nivel B1 en estudiantes universitarios económicamente desfavorecidos a través de la radio y los podcasts

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of radio and podcasts as educational tools for enhancing listening skills in English and Portuguese. It focuses on five 45–55-minute programs covering cultural topics such as cross-cultural misconceptions, music, and expert interviews, aimed at B1 foreign language students. Employing a qualitative approach with mixed data collection methods, the research gathered both numerical and experiential insights from twenty-five participating students. Five workshops, featuring questions related to each program, were conducted to assess listening comprehension. Analysis revealed that integrating creative and culturally engaging content in radio and podcast formats significantly motivates students and promotes autonomous learning. Survey conducted via Google Forms indicated that many participants scored 80% in their assessments. These findings highlight the importance of aligning educational materials with students' interests and needs. Consequently, when teachers incorporate culturally rich and relevant content into listening activities, students demonstrate greater enthusiasm and enhanced comprehension. To successfully implement this methodology, it is recommended that teachers consider students' interests beforehand and ensure they feel involved in the process throughout.

Keywords: listening, broadcasting, podcasts.

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RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga la efectividad de la radio y los podcasts como herramientas educativas para mejorar las habilidades auditivas en inglés y portugués. Se centra en cinco programas de 45 a 55 minutos que cubren temas culturales como conceptos erróneos interculturales, música y entrevistas con expertos, dirigidos a estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras B1. Empleando un enfoque cualitativo con métodos mixtos de recopilación de datos, la investigación recopiló información numérica y experiencial de veinticinco estudiantes participantes. Se llevaron a cabo cinco talleres, con preguntas relacionadas con cada programa, para

evaluar la comprensión auditiva. El análisis reveló que la integración de contenido creativo y culturalmente atractivo en formatos de radio y podcast motiva significativamente a los estudiantes y promueve el aprendizaje autónomo. La encuesta realizada a través de Google Forms indicó que muchos participantes obtuvieron una puntuación del 80% en sus evaluaciones. Estos hallazgos resaltan la importancia de alinear los materiales educativos con los intereses y necesidades de los estudiantes. En consecuencia, cuando los profesores incorporan contenidos culturalmente ricos y relevantes en las actividades de escucha, los estudiantes demuestran un mayor entusiasmo y una mayor comprensión. Para implementar con éxito esta metodología, se recomienda que los profesores consideren los intereses de los estudiantes de antemano y se aseguren de que se sientan involucrados en el proceso durante todo el proceso.

Palabras clave: escuchar, radiodifusión, podcasts.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to highlight advancements in the field of education that assist future teacher in enhancing their listening comprehension skills. Exploring alternative methods for improving listening comprehension is crucial in language education.

To demonstrate the validity of these headways, this research enforces a mixed-methods approach that connects qualitative and quantitative strategies to gather detail and accurate information. This approach includes the development of workshops explicitly mapped to test and measure listening comprehension among B1 Portuguese and English students at Uniminuto University. These workshops include comprehension questions that evaluates student's input and output based on the content of a radio podcast program that is currently under development. The workshops are structured to follow the live radio podcast program, encouraging students to test their prior input in active listening and comprehension.

This methodology was chosen having in mind that when it comes to develop an innovative tool, is necessary to have in mind both statistical but also experiential information in order to join the strengths of both strategies and compiling detailed information which can be useful for providing accurate conclusions.

That is to say, when learning a new language, mere classroom involvement is insufficient for improving the listening skills required for English and Portuguese. It is necessary to provide students with varied scenarios where they can enhance their listening comprehension skills.

Economic vulnerability is an implicit aspect addressed by the proposed strategy. Importantly, this study aims to provide a cost-free solution for students, ensuring they do not need to invest in the strategy. The radio and podcast programs will be freely distributed and available on user-friendly platforms like Zeno Radio and YouTube. Both applications require no subscription or additional investment, ensuring that economically vulnerable students can easily access these resources.

The goal is to enhance the listening comprehension skills of B1-level students at Uniminuto University in their fifth semester, in both English and Portuguese, through a radio podcast series focused on the impact of culture on communication in these languages. To achieve this objective, the following step-by-step plan will be implemented:

1. Collect information about potential topics for the programs by creating a survey with relevant questions regarding the program content.
2. Organize the questions to be discussed during the different sessions.
3. Invite four experienced language teachers and learner to share their insights on languages and culture on the radio program.
4. Design workshops based on the radio podcast programs to measure students' listening comprehension.
5. Evaluate students, experiences by creating a questionnaire where they can share their insights related to the program, after the radio podcast sessions.
6. Conduct a team session with some students to gather detailed feedback about their experiences.
7. Analyze the results obtained from the radio podcast program to address the research question.

Developing concepts in depth

Differentiating Listening from Comprehension

It is crucial to address why listening comprehension was chosen as the skill to be strengthened over others. At Uniminuto University, students learning English or Portuguese struggle the most with listening. This is evident from the low scores fifth-semester students receive on listening comprehension test. The primary reason for this difficulty is the lack of sufficient exposure to scenarios where they can practice their listening skills. Consequently, when faced with listening exercises or tests, students often feel incapable of answering correctly due to their fear of not understanding anything.

Moreover, it is essential to define what listening comprehension is to highlight the importance of focusing on this skill. To understand the depth of listening comprehension, we need to examine definitions that clarify how it differs from general listening.

Listenwise (2020) provides a definition about active listening: “Active listening is normally where teachers center their attention when working with learners, as the listener is often expected to do something with the information they are listening to. It must be processed differently than just hearing it in the background, to comprehend and incorporate information gathered through listening. Teacher needs to encourage students to make listening to the primary activity, not something they do while engaged in another task” (Listenwise, 2020, p. 4).

Based on Ahmed (2015) listening comprehension is a rigorous process that requires a lot of use of knowledge and competences required for understanding. In Hadi’s words, et al. (2021) states comprehensive listening as the capability to spot and understand what others are saying. Adler, R. Et al (2015) declares there are eight types of listening responses, Silent listening is about giving positive nonverbal responses without verbal feedback. Questioning Listening occurs when the onlookers ask the speaker for additional information. Paraphrasing listening is related to giving feedback that reprises the message the speaker sent. Empathizing entails perspective taking, emotional contagion, and to have a genuine concern for the student. Supporting listening occurs when a sort of response that reveals the listener’s connection to the speaker and reflects his or her feelings toward the speaker. Analyzing listening occurs when the listener offers an understanding of the speaker’s message. Evaluating listening means responding by appraising the speaker’s thoughts or behaviors. Advising Listening means responding by offering counsels for dealing with speaker’s problem.

Atikah (2021) says that listening comprehension is a very integrated skills that takes a crucial part within the languages learning and helps in the development of dissimilar language competences. SAGE Flex for public Speaking (n, d) mentions that to be a thriving listener, it’s necessary to understand that listening involves more than just receiving the words that are directed to us. Nemtchinova (2013) says that Listening is an essential component of everyday interaction in any language because it considers for half of verbal scenarios and exercises an important role in academic, occupational, social, and individual contexts which are also an extraordinary and complicated activity that demands different types of skills and processes that interact with each other. Adelman (2012) states that people need skillful listening so that they can learn. After gathering different insights listening comprehension is the capacity to understand a dialogue so that the student can give their opinion, summarize what was mentioned and also establish their own opinion regarding what was discussed.

Broadcasting

To continue, the radio is one of the educational tools which is used to help in the improvement of listening comprehension. Radio is known as a means of communication that transmits information through electromagnetic waves, according to Munadi (2013; as cited in Budyana et al., 2018) The features of sound media are focused on their capability to stimulate hearing. Its main characteristic is to delivery information using sound media transmitted with additional signs (verbal and nonverbal) (p.3) That is to say that one of the most important radio’s characteristics is to provide information through sounds, which is necessary to enhance the students’ listening skills. Phelan (2022) points out that broadcasting is the transmission of audiovisual signals(programs) to a large audience called listeners or viewers. Ritakumari (2019) establishes that there are different classifications of educational media, among them there are audio media, visual media and audio-visual; Audio media deals with teaching-learning tools that can address the sense of hearing; this media can be listened alone due to it carries sound such as audio cassettes, recorder, player and radio; Visual media are understood as media for the sense of sight (eyes) or the media that can be seen such as televisions, computers or even white boards; Audio-visual is about didactic materials that offer students audio-visual experiences while appealing to the sense of hearing and sight simultaneously, such as videotapes, and closed-circuit televisions. Having in mind what was mentioned before, using audiovisual content can be appealing for the participants involved in the program.

Podcasting

There is a gap in those definitions since they are talking about the program that already exists, yet they are not considering the process of creating a podcast. When it comes to talk about the process of creation, the appropriate term to highlight that process is known as “Podcasting.” Based on Cambridge Dictionary(n.d.) podcasting is defined as: “the procedure of creating digital recordings of radio shows that the audience can stream from the internet...” Basically, podcasting refers to the whole process of creating a podcast, writing scripts, planning the sessions, and making questions such as who would be the best guest to discuss any specific thing regarding culture? how long has the program to last? And so on. Parrales (2023), points out that podcasting deals with a constructivist perspective because it is composed of several views where there are incorporated active, social, and creative aspects of learning.

Understanding what a podcast is

Likewise, it is important to talk about podcasts, that is why there will be some definitions from various sources as a starting point. According to Cambridge Online Dictionary (2024) podcast is “a radio program that is recorded digitally that can be downloaded from the internet and reproduced on a computer or on a player”. Podcasts are useful tools for distributing educational information which may help students in their journey to strengthen their learning regarding listening skill.

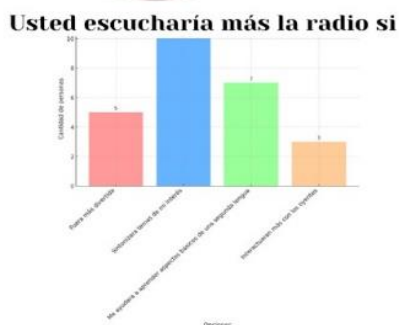
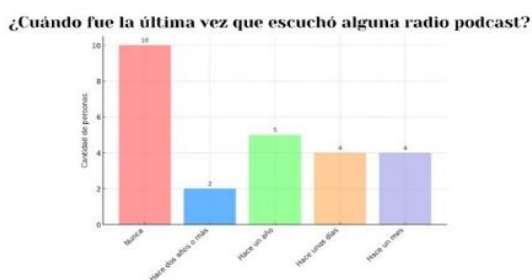
On the other hand, Dictionary LLC (n.d.) account for podcast as a “Audio-visual file or recording, generally part of a thematic segments, that can be streamed from websites to a player or computer, download or subscribe to one-hour long everyday podcasts of our radio show”.

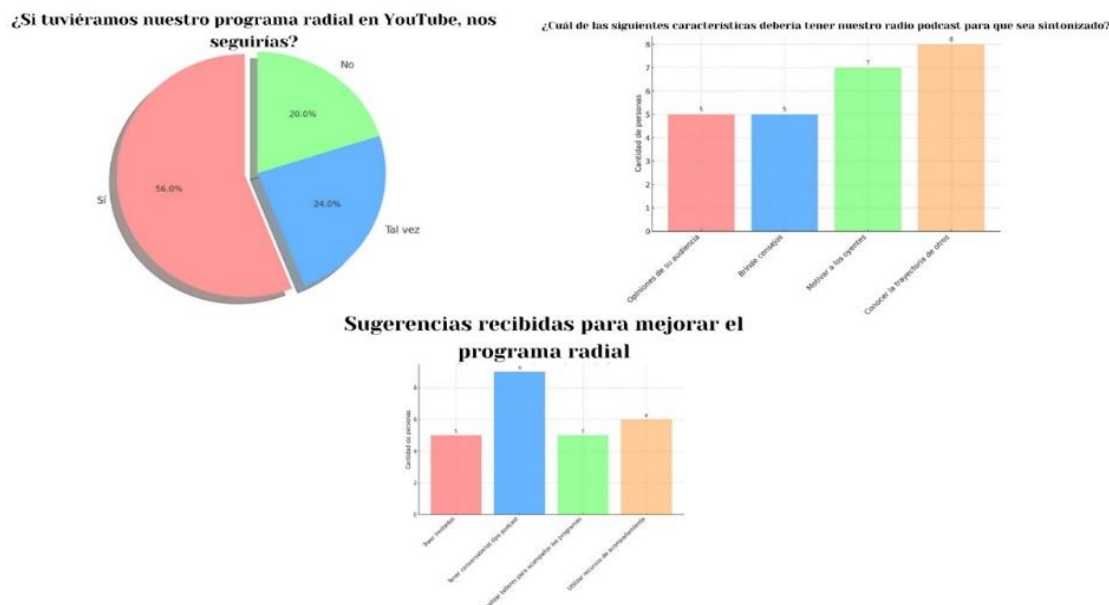
Additionally, podcasts are not only to be played on a laptop or on a player, but they can also be downloaded and played any other time when students want to. In 10 Ideas for using podcast in the classroom(n.d.) there are some that support the construction of this radio-podcast program; Comprehension questions, which means to prepare some comprehension and reflections questions for the students to complete after listening; and create your own podcast which means to stablish a show structure scaffold and give students a range of topics they choose from to write a podcast episode or series. Gunawan Et.al (2023) state that listening to podcasts exposes students to an extended range of vocabulary but also helps them develop a deeper understanding of word meaning and usage.

METHODOLOGY

After exploring the most relevant concepts, the main purpose of this paper is to narrate the process of constructing a radio podcast regarding cultural aspects from both English and Portuguese languages to help students enhance their listening skills. To make everything more appealing for them, the podcasting was planned based on their interests to construct the best experience for B1 students at Uniminuto, considering the axis of culture.

First at all, to determine how to design the radio and podcasts programs, a survey was made to find out the interests and likes of the group as well as their points of view about what they want to hear and practice.





Based on the statistics given the following conclusions were drawn; most of the students would enjoy streaming the radio podcast program. Many of the students never listen to radio podcast programs because they do not stream or discuss on topics of their interest. Some students consider that encouraging students through the program might be helpful. One of the suggestions received the most was to have conversation groups in podcast format and using supporting resources such as visual aids, musical background for the program.

Organizing the Theme-Program: Naming & Podcasting

After compiling the survey results, 45 to 55-minute radio programs and podcast were developed. The initial step was to decide on a name. “Major Linguas” combines English and Portuguese words. To hosts sessions with guests and record the programs, we used the Streamyard platform. This platform enabled the inclusion of presentations, keywords, and sentences to aid the audience’s understanding of the speakers. Streamyard played a crucial role in providing a well-structured format for recording the programs. The program’s structure was guided by the students’ recommendations ensuring their input was integral to the organization.

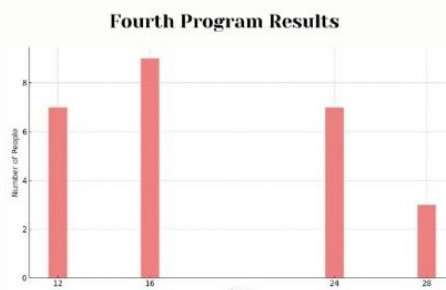
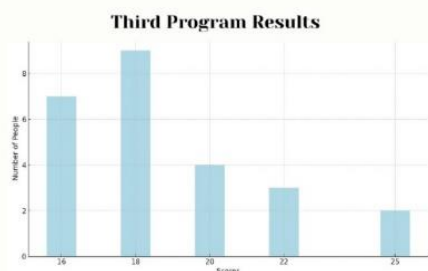
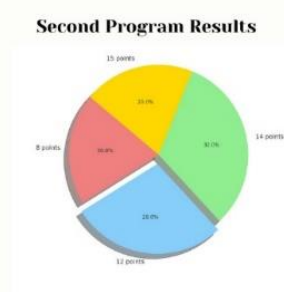
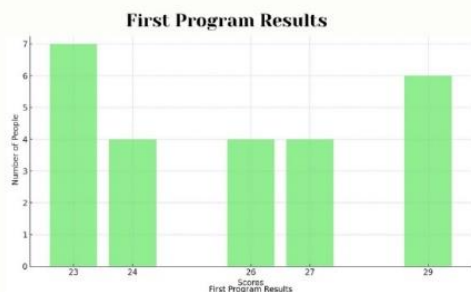
The importance of CLT when constructing the radio podcast program

Taking into consideration that strengthening listening comprehension is all-important in our program, it is necessary to use the target languages for every planned session. In Malika’s words (2023), Communicative language teaching is one of the teaching methods that highlight the line with student-centered approach, where the students can interact with the target language, by promoting communicative events to be comprehended (Malika,2023, Pag. 1, P-1). Another key thing to remember is that whether the intention is to strengthen listening comprehension is crucial to establish different contexts where students are allowed to put into practice listening skills. To accomplish this, CLT is the right methodology to work with. According to JETIR (2019), teaching by using CLT is convenient because the target language is used; The situations where the discussions are carried must be appropriate for the context, the roles, the speakers, setting and register; Activities must have a communicative purpose. Savignon(n.d.) States that CLT positions focus on the learner; their need provides a framework for designing program goals regarding functional competence. Kholstinina. Et.al (2021) says that one of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency in language use. For the reasons provided before, conducting a radio program having in mind CLT is the best guidance to make sure students’ advancement, enhancement and progress.

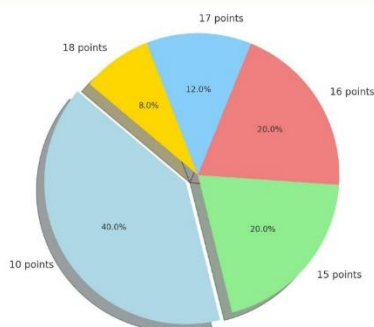
Having in mind students’ insights while constructing the radio podcast program, the organization will be as follows: Major Linguas First Program will be about pop music talking about Michael Jackson’s life, Major Linguas Second Program Will be about having a conversation with Guillermo Ospino about Culture, Major Linguas Third Program will be talking about culture with Smith, Major Linguas Fourth Program will be Conversando sobre cultura com Carolina, Major Linguas Final Program will be Conversando sobre cultura com Claudia, it is important to mention that these names are only available in the podcast edition since in the radio edition everything was carried out keeping guests identities or topics hidden.

The results of the radio-podcast program are discussed here. 25 Participants, whose identities are protected, attended a workshop during each streaming session to assess their listening comprehension and critical thinking skills. Open-ended

questions allowed for detailed responses which were manually graded based on key aspects. Additionally, interviews with two participants provided insights into their experiences. Lastly, a questionnaire gathered feedback on the five programs to create a performance rubric and identify key elements of a successful program.



Final Program Results



First of all, the first program was a discussion made about Michael Jackson’s life, hence, the workshop developed condensed the most relevant aspects that were discussed during the program, the results are divided as follow: seven participants(28%) achieved a score of 23 out of 29 points, which corresponds to approximately 79.31% of the total possible score and that suggests that these students were able to grasp a meaningful portion of the material presented in the radio podcast; four participants(16 %) scored 24 out of 29 points, which means that they got 82.76% of the total score, which reflects a slightly higher level of understanding, demonstrating improved comprehension capabilities among this subset of participants; another four participants(16%) obtained 26 out of 29 points, which means they got 89.66% of the total score, which highlights a high degree of proficiency in listening comprehension; equally, four participants(16%) achieved 27 out of 29 points that is approximately 93.10% of the total. This score means an even more refined comprehension skill, with these students demonstrating exceptional listening abilities; To finish this first analysis six participants (24%) reached the maximum score 29 out of 29 points, representing a perfect 100%. The previous impressive performances highlight the success of the program in completely engaging and educating these top-performing individuals. Overall, the first program was a total success since all of the students got more than of the half score.

Secondly, this program was taken and developed as a guest-insight program, that points out that there is not certain previous information related to on data basis since it deals with experienced-conclusion interviews, having the aforementioned

in mind, it is possible to understand some changes that occurred or were presented in this second analysis; seven students, which corresponds to a 28%, got 12 out of 15 points, with this in mind, they got 80% from total possible score, which establishes a strong level of comprehension, these participants were capable of understanding and engaging with a significant size of the radio podcast content; to continue, five students that correspond to a 20%, got 8 out of 15 points, it defines a 53.33%; This result suggested that these group of students experienced some challenging scenarios when trying to follow up the interview that was carried out, which means that some improvement and accompany is necessary for improving listening comprehension; eight students which correspond to a 32%, scored 14 out of 15 points, which is equal to 93.33%, this high score demonstrates a strong grasp in regards the material; Lastly, five students, which correspond to a 20%, scored a perfect result of 15 out of 15 points, which represents a 100% that permits to conclude that the participants were knowledgeable about the radio podcast material; to conclude the results allow to evidence how the radio program is fostering listening comprehension skills among the majority of participants; while also highlights areas where further improvement may be necessary to support all participants in reaching their full potential.

Third, this program was way similar to the previous in format, the person interviewed was different, however; additionally, this program invalidates the conclusions that were drawn about the previous one; having data basis available on the internet is not a constant about listening comprehension increasing, but it is possible to assure that the more students are involved with the content, the easier it gets for them to follow the program without struggling; here are the results: seven students scored 16 out of 25 points, which a 64% of the total possible score; this indicates a moderate level of comprehension, showing that these students grasped a substantial portion of the material but with room for improvement; nine students achieved 18 out of 25 points, equivalent to 72%; this score reflects a stronger level of understanding, suggesting that these students were able to comprehend more of the podcast content; to continue, four students got 20 out of 25 points, which corresponds to an 80%. The given result shows a high level of comprehension, demonstrating that the students understood well the podcast content; three students obtained 22 out of 25 points; which represents an 88%; this high score demonstrate a remarkable understanding; with these students nearly mastering the podcast material; two students got a perfect score of 25 out of 25 points which is a 100% of the score; results suggested that the radio podcast program genuinely encouraged comprehension skills for many participants, there is still room for further improvement, however, for those with lower scores which highlights the weaknesses and strengths found in the path when implementing the radio podcast program.

Fourth, this program was taken into Portuguese language with a guest who tells their experience learning the language and going deeper into those aspects taken as challenges and achievements. The results are as follow: seven students obtained 12 out of 28 points, which correspond to 42.86% of the total possible score; this result permits to determine a lower level of comprehension, proposing that students found challenging to understand most of the podcast; nine students got 16 out of 28 points, which is equivalent to 57.14%; the previous score displays an average level of understanding, showing that the students were able to get involved with the material compared to those with lower scores, there is still opportunity about enhancing, though; six students obtained 24 out of 28 points, which is about 85.71%; the previous score establishes a highly strong comprehension of the radio podcast, for concluding that these students mostly got involved with the major part of the material; three students developed it perfectly scoring 28 out of 28 points and that represents a 100%; this remarkable performance means an excellent level of listening comprehension regarding Portuguese B1, showing that the students really understood all aspects dealt during the radio podcast content; in a nutshell, the radio podcast program enhanced comprehension for many students, thought the variability in scores highlights the importances of targeted strategies for helping learners achieving better outcomes.

Fifth and final, this program also deals with Portuguese language, but in this case the guest is someone who knows the language in detail and can expand students' horizons when it comes to learning Portuguese language. The scores obtained are presented in the following way:

Ten students, which correspond to a 40%, got 10 out of 18 points, which means they got approximately 55.56% of the total score; the result establishes a lower to moderate level of comprehension, so these students were able to scarcely understand different aspects given through the podcast, but may have presented problems with more complex parts; five students, which correspond to a 20% obtained 15 out of 18 points, that is equal to 83.33% of the total possible score; this score displays a strong understanding of the podcast content, these students were able to barely understand the all material. Five students, which correspond to a 20% got 16 out of 18 points that approximately is an 88.89%; this score permits to determine an excellent level of comprehension to indicate that these students understood nearly all about the radio podcast content; three students, which correspond to a 12% got 17 out of 18 points, which represents a 94.44%; that is to say an exceptional comprehension ability was presented; two students, which correspond to 8%, achieved a perfect score of 18 out of 18 points, leading to 100%; this remarkable performance highlights an exceptional level of listening comprehension, determining that these students understood all aspects about the radio podcast content; In general terms, the results determine the program was successful in

enhancing listening comprehension for most of the students, however, the variability of scores suggest opportunities for supporting students so that they can improve their listening skills as well.

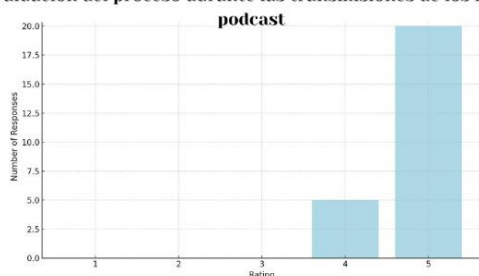
In a brief way, the results across all five programs illustrate that the radio podcast-based listening comprehension approach is highly effective, encouraging understanding among many students. On the other hand, there is a variability in scores presented in different programs highlighting the need about ongoing support and monitoring companioned by targeted strategies to address the diverse needs of learners. Tailoring interventions based on these outcomes could further enhance overall listening comprehension and ensure that all students would have the opportunity to reach and achieve their full potential.

Upon analyzing the interviews with two students involved in a radio podcast program designed to enhance listening comprehension, several themes about language learning and mindset transformation become apparent. Initially, both students struggled to perceive any significant improvement in their listening comprehension.

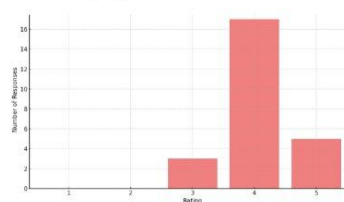
However, *Student 1* later acknowledged that engaging with content that was personally relevant led to a shift in their learning approach. They highlighted how understanding cultural nuances, rather than relying on literal translations, enriched their language skills. In contrast, *Student 2* attributed their progress to the program’s extended listening exercises, which were more demanding than typical classroom activities. This student realized the value of persistence over speed in language acquisition, understanding that language learning is not a linear process.

Furthermore, both students emphasized the importance of cultural awareness, recognizing that effective communication requires an understanding of cultural contexts, even among speakers of the same language. Overall, the program prompted both participants to embrace autonomous learning, illustrating that language acquisition extends beyond formal education and depends largely on personal effort and engagement with meaningful content.

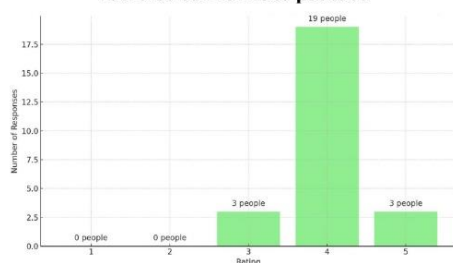
Evaluación del proceso durante las transmisiones de los radio



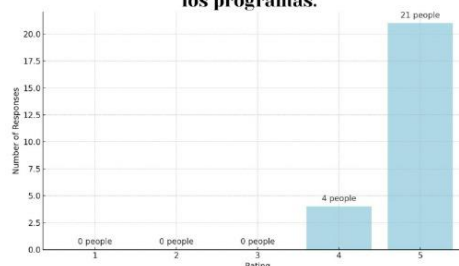
Evaluación del proceso con las actividades a realizar sobre los programas transmitidos.

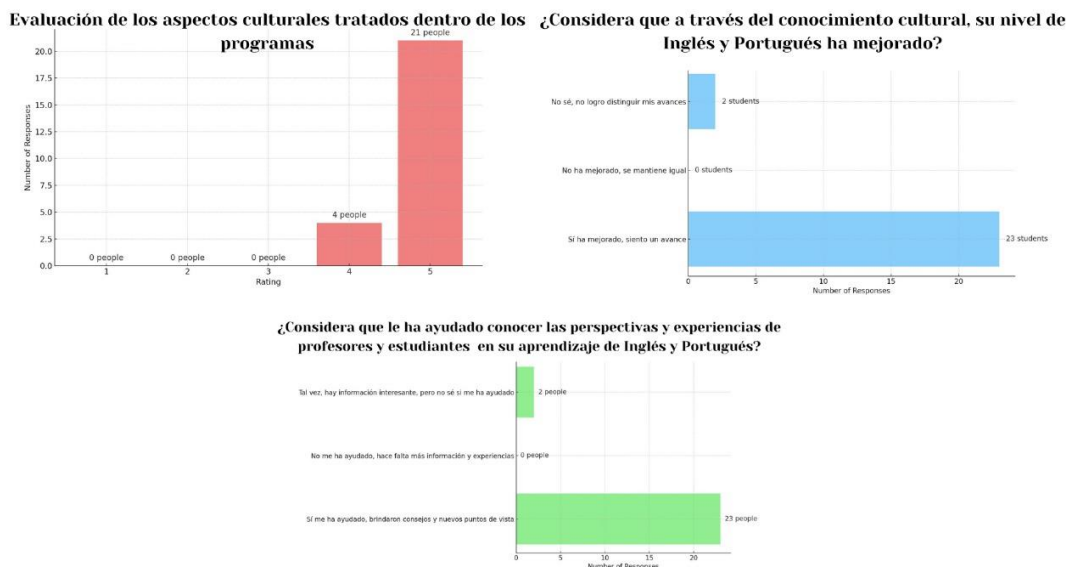


Evaluación del contenido abarcado dentro de los programas radiales con formato podcast



Evaluación de las plataformas utilizadas para la transmisión de los programas.





Based on the graphics shown previously, is possible to conclude that most of the students enjoyed the experienced and considered that everything was carried out with excellence in the following aspects: streaming, workshops, platforms, content, cultural aspects, improvements, knowing other experiences. Since students' interests were taken into consideration, the results reflected their agreement with the final edition. When teachers want to improve or help students strengthen any skill, is important to make feel involved during the whole process.

DISCUSSION

The sole purpose of this research paper was to analyze how radio podcasts could help students enhance their listening comprehension abilities. Consequently, a 5-session program was carried out, in which students were engaged and participated actively by solving the listening workshops in each session.

After examining the results in detail, it is evident how using alternatives for enhancing listening skills such as radio podcasts in students might be resourceful. It is indispensable to explain that every researcher is going to adapt the appropriate platform based on the audience. Nonetheless, the outcomes can be quite similar, for instance, comparing the results obtained from Rodríguez & Serrano (2023), they could notice that students improved their listening comprehension after implementing the program by getting better results in tests, based on those results, they established that every single teacher must have access to platforms which contains podcasts content to have more variety to put into practice listening skills. However, nowadays, it is possible to find plenty of material on the internet which can be used in different classes, so it is important to take advantage of the free resources available (p.258, p.2).

Second, during the radio podcast streaming sessions, students preferred to use their computers instead of using their smartphones, something different from Gonula (2020), where students preferred to use their smartphones because when it comes to a vodcast program, something that is only about listening but not having visual aids, students might prefer to use smartphones. Notwithstanding, by incorporating both podcast and radio formats in our research the contrast between these platforms is that all the participants streamed the program by Major Linguas YouTube Channel. The reason for this change might be that gestures and body language are in widespread support and contribute to having a better understanding of what is being discussed.

Third, most of the time, students need to be exposed to different contents because they will be able to be knowledgeable about different areas of English speaking. Parrales and Mariscal (2023) stated that when students are exposed to authentic, real-world language usage, intending to identify different accents, variety of vocabulary and plenty of conversational styles, they will be closer to the reality instead of just acquiring book-knowledge (P. 3, page 10). That is to say that being exposed to diverse cultures using podcast is an effective way to encourage students to learn languages because they can find content from their interests which will be useful in the learning process.

Lastly, by passing the time, there is a need for more investigations into the influence of radio podcast to check its current effect to help students and how it can be enhanced or boosted according to the changing needs of the world.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to enhancing listening comprehension, creativity and innovation are essential. When learning a language being resourceful can be an alternative to encourage students to be more autonomous according to their learning process.

Podcasts and radio are tools that have been being used for a long time. The idea is as a teacher it is important to look for new combinations to make those tools appealing and, in that way, start to be autonomous. Besides, the main objective is to provoke and make students aware of the importance of autonomous practices such as listening to podcasts and radio programs in the target language to improve more.

Thus, it is suitable to create theme podcasts contemplating students' needs or the target population needs since it is going to encourage them to participate and realize the relevance of those practices to improve.

In line with the outcomes, it is possible to assure that 95% of students developed a better listening comprehension when they got involved in radio podcast with cultural aspects.

Finally, there is one question we have left: Is that the only possible combination when it comes to innovating the way in which podcasts are given? That is an interrogation that future researchers might answer.

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